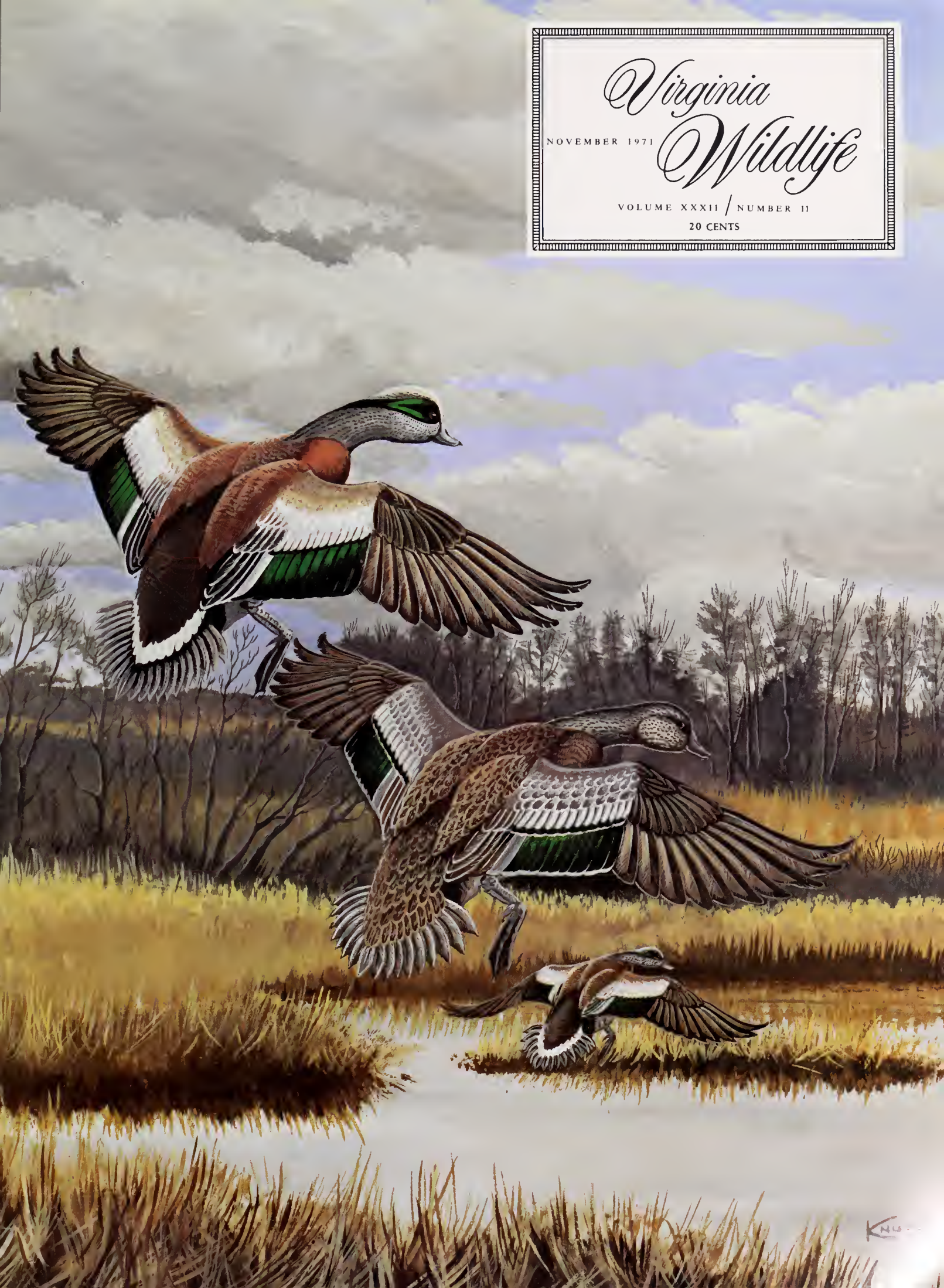

Virginia Wildlife

NOVEMBER 1971

VOLUME XXXII / NUMBER 11

20 CENTS

Virginia Wildlife

Dedicated to the Conservation of Virginia's Wildlife and Related Natural Resources and to the Betterment of Outdoor Recreation in Virginia

Published by VIRGINIA COMMISSION OF GAME AND INLAND FISHERIES, *Richmond, Virginia 23230*

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PUBLICATION OFFICE: Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries, 4010 W. Broad St., Richmond, Virginia

JAMES F. MCINTEER, JR. . . . . *Editor*
ANN E. PILCHER . . . . . *Editorial Assistant*
LEON G. KESTELOO . . . . . *Photographer*
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NOVEMBER

Volume XXXII/No. 11

IN THIS ISSUE **PAGE**

Editorial: November Afield 3
Letters 3
The Hunter: A Man Who Can Be Proud 4
Born for Ducks 7
Public Hunting Expands Use of State Park Lands 9
Geese 11
Conservationgram 13
1971-72 Hunting Regulations 14
Virginia Big Game Kill Records 15
Waterfowl (regulations) 16
A Century of Fish Conservation 17
'Possum! 19
Let's Cook 'Possum 20
Rare Kill in Fluvanna 21
Know Your Wardens: B. U. Miller; Ernest Yeatts 22
On the Lighter Side: Traveler's Warning 23
The Drumming Log 24
Youth Afield 25
On the Waterfront 26
Bird of the Month: Ring-necked Duck 27
Christmas Gift Subscription Ad 28

Observations, conclusions and opinions expressed in *Virginia Wildlife* are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the members or staff of the Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries.

COVER: American widgeons (baldpates), acrylic painting by Carl "Spike" Knuth, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: One year, $2.00; three years, $5.00. Make check or money order payable to Treasurer of Virginia and send to Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries, P. O. Box 11104, Richmond, Virginia 23230.

VIRGINIA WILDLIFE is published monthly at Richmond, Virginia, by the Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries, 4010 W. Broad Street. All magazine subscriptions, change of address notices, and inquiries should be sent to Box 11104, Richmond, Va. 23230. The editorial office gratefully receives for publication news items, articles, photographs, and sketches of good quality which deal with Virginia's soils, water, forests, and wildlife. The Commission assumes no responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts and illustrative material. Credit is given on material published. Permission to reprint text material is granted provided credit is given the Virginia Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries and VIRGINIA WILDLIFE. Clearances must be made with photographers or artists to reproduce illustrations.

Second-class postage paid at Richmond, Va.

NOVEMBER AFIELD

NOVEMBER is the month of Thanksgiving. It is bright skies and hazy horizons of Indian summer. It is frost on the ground under a hunters' moon. It is the rattle of dry stalks and seed pods disturbed by the north wind. It is the smell of autumn leaves. It is the rush of wild wings and the sound of wild voices over marshes. It is expectancy and excitement as once again dreams of days outdoors with dog and gun come to fulfillment. It is time for an afternoon stroll across the countryside, for renewing contact with the good earth as autumn stillness steals across the land.

At least, that is what we think November should be. Too often the season has its sadder side.

The number of licensed hunters in Virginia has been growing at a more rapid rate (some 8% per year the past two years) than ever before, but increasing license sales do not necessarily translate into increasing numbers of people who are capable of realizing fully the enjoyment the hunting experience should yield. Too often they translate into traffic jams on hunting access roads, discourteous and thoughtless conduct, mutual interference, general bedlam and frustrations.

Some hunters leave home already fearful that they will not bag enough game to make the day's effort worthwhile. In this frame of mind they have no difficulty justifying their most pessimistic outlook and making their anticipated disappointment a self-fulfilling prophecy. They carry to field and forest the same consuming drives to excel and to win, and the same anxieties lest they fail, that have become so much a part of their daily lives in a fiercely competitive and materialistic society in which possessing rather than experiencing is the goal. Instead of measuring hunting success in terms of enjoyment, they measure enjoyment in terms of material success, the tangible evidence of success in this case being the full game bag with anything less a mark of frustration and failure.

Participation in the harvest of the annual game crop is undoubtedly what hunting is all about, but it is the experience of the participation rather than the weight of the game bag that spells real success or failure. There are disciplines to be practiced, lessons to be learned, perceptions to be sharpened, and perspectives to be gained. Only he who practices self-restraint, courtesy and sportsmanship in the field, who seeks knowledge of the ways of the wild, and who marvels in wonder and in awe before the mysteries still concealed in the web of life on the planet, is able to enjoy fully the hunting experience.

For those who truly understand why they hunt, and know what it is they really seek—for those who measure success in terms of pleasure and fulfillment, instead of looking at things the other way around—there will be enjoyment aplenty in this new hunting season. For those who do get a full measure of enjoyment from the hunting experience, November is still what it should be, the month of Thanksgiving.—J. F. Mc.

LETTERS

Thanks to Marjorie Masselin

MY sincere thanks goes to Marjorie Masselin of Richmond for her article "Let's Cook Skate" in the October issue of *Virginia Wildlife*. For many years (and especially this past summer), fishing in our area of the Chesapeake Bay has been plagued with the catching of these time wasting creatures. I thought the only thing they were good for was the tangling of lines, making a mess of the boat, and most of all losing valuable fishing time.

I will not frown at the thought of catching skate or throw them back now, knowing they're good to eat. Thank you Marjorie, and *Virginia Wildlife!*

Richard L. Kelley
Fairfax

More "Thigmotropic" Sticks

AFTER seeing your article (Thigmotropic Snake Sticks) in the August *Virginia Wildlife* about the natural formation of canes caused by vines growing around small trees, I thought about my Dad's collection. He has put hand grips or nobs on some to make canes, and some have natural grips. I am enclosing a picture of most of his collection. These were collected over a period of years by S. L. Roberts, State Route 117, Peters Creek Road.

I enjoy *Virginia Wildlife* very much

Marion Roberts
Salem

Thanks. Your picture of "thigmotropic" sticks is better than the one we had to use with the article.—Ed.

USE SPECIAL CHRISTMAS SUBSCRIPTION RATE and save 40¢ on each one year subscription. Give *Virginia Wildlife* to your friends for only $1.60 for a whole year. Use special order form inserted in this issue. If you act RIGHT NOW, gift subscriptions can start with the December issue. If you wait, it will be too late. Offer expires December 31.

The Hunter: A Man Who Can Be Proud

By BILL COCHRAN
Roanoke

WHILE attending a banquet in Washington not long ago, I was seated next to a young lady, a school teacher, she told me. We were enjoying a steak dinner. At first, the conversation among several people around the table was somewhat frivolous, as it often is when strangers cast together are groping to make one another feel comfortable and a part of the group.

Talk between the young lady and me varied, then evolved around to my job as outdoor editor of a metropolitan newspaper in Virginia. She told me she enjoyed fishing, and with a great deal of pride related how on her last outing she had caught a rather large catfish, topping anything her boy friend was able to catch that day.

Then she said, with a change of expression, "But how can you hunt? How can you kill a soft-eyed deer?"

It is a question I hear quite often these days. Sometimes it comes as a gentle barb. Other times it is asked in anger. Always, it comes more and more frequently.

All sportsmen are becoming aware of the fact that growing numbers of people are beginning to question, and even tamper with, that precious part of our lives we call the sport of hunting. Perhaps my vocation makes me more aware of it than most sportsmen, but quite frankly I feel that hunting is in danger, and more so than most of us realize. That's why when the question of why I hunt is put to me in a serious sense, I weigh heavily my responsibility to give a meaningful answer to the best of my ability.

I cut another piece of steak to give myself a moment more to think. I have found that many people who ask me this question are so deeply opposed to hunting that nothing I say will change their feelings. This young lady, however, I hoped would be different.

Sportsmen realize that there is much more to hunting than just bagging game.

The thought occurred to me that here we were, sawing through sirloin, and talking about the cruelty of killing an animal. It made her question somewhat hypocritical. The steer we ate was once a lovable calf, a living thing later taken off to the slaughterhouse and killed without chance of escape. I debated telling her that it had not given up its life for our enjoyment any more willingly than does a deer or any other game species. In fact, its harvest was much more certain than any deer in the sights of my bow or gun.

But I did not say this. Sometimes, perhaps, the anthropometrical approach is a useful rebuttal. Not always. Not this time.

Often, I believe, we get a little too red faced and emotional when we try to defend our sport. Some of the hard-core gun magazines and gun organizations do more harm than good when they shout "commie" and worse at the anti-hunting people. You'll find a percentage of cranks and nuts in the anti-hunting group, to be sure, but many aren't. A few, even, are my friends. Like it or not, I think it is time that we recognize they have serious concerns, and their concerns aren't going to disappear like the morning fog, either. Often, we must listen to their side, if we expect them to listen to ours. Only then do we have a chance to overcome their concerns. And it isn't easy, even then. Too many times, sadly, it is downright impossible.

Some of the anti-hunting letters I receive, especially during the deer season, are so strong, so biased, so deeply opposed to the sport, that a debate is useless, a waste of time. As an editor, I try to avoid many of them to begin with. I will not write a gory hunting article. Gory pictures are even a greater taboo. Likely as not these days, I'll feature a picture of a hunter cooking over a campfire rather than one grinning over a freshly bagged trophy. Not always. But I try to maintain a balance. I try to show that there is more to hunting than killing. Still, the anti-hunting letters come in increasing batches to all newspapers, and even to outdoor sports magazines.

At one time, I believed that the greatest threat to hunting was the encroachment of civilization, the stamping out of wild areas where game lives. No longer. I now believe that attitude, philosophy, if you wish, bred by a generation who has gotten away from the grassroots of nature, who views every animal as a Disney character, is a much greater threat. It would not surprise me to see the anti-hunting movement progress much more rapidly the next few years than

the anti-gun movement.

Hunting, thus, must be defended. To do this will not be easy. As hunters, we have become a minority group, and are becoming more so each year, even among outdoor recreationists. Yet, there is still hope. Some people we can educate. Others we must reason with. Still others we must stand firm against.

The young lady, I felt, was not beyond educating. For her, I felt the soft, warm touch was best. I simply tried to tell her some of the gentle things of nature and heritage that motivate me to be a hunter, and that as a hunter I am neither a crank nor a killer, but a sportsman, even a conservationist and ecologist.

Nature generously produces more game annually than she is capable of taking care of, and this surplus is for the hunter. I believe God meant for it to be that way. If the hunter does not harvest the surplus, then nature will reap her own, because for some to live, others must die. Perhaps there is a measure of cruelty to hunting, but there is a much greater measure to the normal workings of nature. The average urbanite, living in a brick and pavement world, has gotten so far away from such basics that he is not aware of this.

There is more to hunting, though, than even this profound fact of life. For me, the killing is a small part. I will feed a dog all year, keep several hundred dollars worth of guns and walk dozens of heart-tearing miles just for a fleeting chance or two at a grouse thundering out of the cover. And when I bag one, I will lovingly examine it, soft and limp and warm in my hand, with mixed emotions. There is ecstasy. But there is remorse, too.

When I told the young lady this, she appeared to be surprised to hear a hunter speak in such a manner. Explaining to a non-hunter that a man who hunts both loves and desires to kill a game animal is not an easy task. But such feelings truly are a part of a sportsman. If it were not so, I would quit. I'm not sure the young lady understood. I'm not sure even that I fully understand.

For those who will listen, there are more logical, and less philosophic, arguments. I have little patience for the guy who confronts me and charges that hunters are wiping out wildlife in Virginia. This is a bald-faced lie. Some day I fear that I will slip and say the same to the face of one who comes at me with such guff.

Hunters can be proud of the part they have played in wild turkey restoration.

But it is always best to discount such rot with facts. And facts are plentiful.

Modern hunters, for one, have had a greater influence on the conversation of wildlife and wild places than any other segment in society. For years, the hunter has been at the forefront of nearly every worthwhile conservation effort, and well before being conservationists and ecologists was the popular thing to do.

Today, American hunters contribute $125 million annually to federal and state wildlife conservation programs. Next time your non-hunting friend belittles your sport, ask him how much he has contributed to the welfare of wildlife.

As hunters, our license fees and the excise tax on our guns and ammunition purchase thousands of acres of game habitat. They hire highly trained game biologists to tend to the welfare of game species. They pay wardens to protect the animals, game and non-game alike. They establish seasons and bag limits to assure populations in the future.

It is no accident, then, that there are more deer in Virginia now than when the early settlers landed in Jamestown. And magnificent wild turkeys recently have been restored in thriving populations where only a few

State game wardens train youngsters on how to be a safe hunter. An important way to assure the future of hunting is to teach young people sportsmanship, safety, and marksmanship.

 (Continued from page 5)

years ago they were unheard of.

It is the hunter, through his finances and influence, who underwrites the wildlife programs of the state and nation. In return, all he asks is the chance to bag a game bird or animal when the time is right and under rigid regulations. On the average, what he takes home annually is so scant he would be embarrassed to mention it. But he does not measure his success by the weight of his game bag, if he is a true sportsman.

In short, a sportsman can return from the fields, woods and marshes filled with pride. He can be proud because there are still quiet places to hunt game in its natural habitat, and he has helped to preserve such places.

Unfortunately, not everyone who carries a gun afield in the pursuit of game is a sportsman. I'm afraid that

Hunter-dollars have assured an ample and healthy deer herd; all sportsmen want is a chance to bag one.

the greatest danger of all to hunting is the hunter himself, that is, the ones among our ranks who do not conduct themselves as sportsmen. Of these, there are all too many. Annually, I hear and see a bellyful of them. Unsportsmanlike action is confined to no certain social group, I've found. Some doctors, lawyers and other highly trained professional men from my city annually go afield and exceed the bag limit of doves and ducks. In the nearby hills, mountain residents lurk about in the darkness shining a spotlight into a deer's eye, blinding and confusing, then killing it. And listen to the letter I received from a Botetourt County landowner who said she and her huband had posted their farm after allowing hunting on it for 19 years:

"We have a string of posted signs all around the place and the hunters can blame themselves for it. I'm not going to tell all we have endured over the years, but a few will give you the general idea.

"One man, a stranger, drove into our garage, got out and locked his car. When my husband told him to move the car he said, 'It isn't hurting anything, is it?' One man blocked our driveway completely. We couldn't get out nor could anyone get in. He got furious when I made him move. During the bear season several cars were parked so that we couldn't get our tractor out when we needed it.

"In the distance of perhaps two blocks our electric fence was cut three times. Last year a bullet zinged right past my son-in-law's head. There is a dent in a trailer on our place from a bullet. Four small children live there. We have an egg farm and when shooting occurs the hens go wild. Some are injured. We've asked hunters not to hunt in the field near the hens, but . . .

"Hunters come on to our place from the back side not even bothering to ask. This year we found three blinds someone built without permission for deer hunting. We got the game warden and, sure enough, two teenage boys from Roanoke were there the first day of bow and arrow season. We let them go to court. The last blind is for hunting deer with guns. We are going to let the game warden help us watch it.

"I'm not going into the beer cans and whisky bottles over the place or the fact a neighbor has already lost a steer this year, but I'm sure you get the idea why farmers will not welcome hunters with open arms, much less with a cup of coffee."

Yes, Mrs. Landowner, I get the idea, and it makes me shameful and a little sick. It's really little wonder that new "No Trespassing" signs will blossom along the fence rows of many favorite hunting spots each fall. Too often hunters are leaving behind a trail of bullet-riddled signs, garbage-strewn campsites, broken fences and a bad taste in the mouth of landowners and everybody else. I'm not saying that all do this, or even a large percentage. But enough go about seeking "wreckeration" more than recreation that we all suffer.

We've reached the point that the eye of society is on every hunter. Whether he likes it or not, each hunter must consider himself an ambassador of hunting. In many ways, our own good behavior is the best defense against the anti-hunting movement.

It is time that we wised up the fools among us, the trespassers, the game hogs, the outlaws, the litterers and the destroyers of property. Too often, I believe, honest sportsmen have spent their wrath on the anti-hunting and anti-gun groups, unleasing sessions of name-calling and pages of venom. I say we should answer the anti-movements with cool logic. If we have wrath to exert, let's spend it on our own who go wrong. Let's let them know we don't appreciate their actions. Let's let them know we won't stand for their faults. With our entire sport at stake, we must conduct ourselves as sportsmen, and see to it that others do the same.

Intent upon a "dead bird," Homer eagerly awaits his command. It was this watchful eye that first suggested his true heritage.

BORN FOR DUCKS

By JAMES A. SULLIVAN
VPI, Blacksburg

CAROLE and Gail left school that afternoon three years ago to buy a dog. I didn't think much about it at the time, but how was I to know what was in store?

The female Labrador had escaped her pen at a most inopportune time, and her seven six-week-old puppies were now up for quick spring clearance on the assumption that they probably weren't all Lab. The liveliest of the bunch, one of two males, was chosen, 12 dollars changed hands, and back to school came Carole, Gail, and newly-named Homer.

My first meeting with Homer was shortly thereafter in one of the long, brightly-lit, tile-floored halls of the biology building. Everyone was fascinated by him, as people are prone to be when confronted by such a young spark of a pup. Though the freshly waxed floors made for slippery and often belated stops, Homer incessantly ran back and forth the length of the hall, with a playful leap for everyone he passed.

The students in the "mole hole" (our graduate office so named for its tunnel-like appearance and total lack of windows) immediately agreed to take turns caring for Homer. The remainder of the time, confined in the mole hole by the lower half of its Dutch door, Homer played with anyone who happened to poke his head in over the barrier.

I first suspected his true heritage not by his build nor by his thick, black coat, but by his steady and watchful eye. Attracted by my tearing a scrap sheet of paper from a notebook and wadding it into a throwable ball, Homer watched as I vainly tried to sink the wad in the wastebasket at the opposite end of the room. No sooner had it bounced off the blackboard and down amongst the maze of desk and chair legs, but Homer was upon it, mouthing it, holding it with his paws, and systematically shredding it with his milk teeth. He had watched my moves from the beginning as if to know that when the paper was thrown, it was thrown for him.

I took his wad of paper while still relatively intact and began testing his retrieving potential. As long as I held the paper, his steady eyes were fixed on my hand. His interest span was amazingly lengthy for a puppy his age; he would sit, waiting, crying, for another chance to chase the paper ball.

Partially because of his long interest span, and partially because I began to spend more time with him in the mole hole, Homer quickly learned to sit, to stay, to fetch a "dead bird" and return with it. That is, of course, not to mention his dropping his tennis ball into his empty dogfood can and proudly displaying the same.

So, not only had Homer found numerous friends, he also learned a number of tricks that he constantly performed for his fellow students and the biology department faculty. But, as in many an individual's training, not everything went so smoothly. It was in his cards, I suppose, that his puppiness would get him into trouble.

Over spring break, many of the mole holers had left. Homer, without the friends with whom he usually played, had to search for things to do. After teething on one lab coat (no pun intended) and completely un-

After a year and a half Homer was no longer thwarted by water. Indeed, that had become the best place in the world to retrieve a bird.

 (Continued from page 7)

winding a tape recording of Carlos Montaya playing Flamenco, Homer advanced to a more scientific endeavor, attempting to digest, in a single afternoon, the last half of the *Journal of Embryology and Experimental Morphology*, volume 12. Needless to say, word soon came down from the second floor that Homer was indefinitely suspended from his studies at Gilmer Hall.

Summer passed and Homer had accustomed himself to the fact that he could not spend all of his waking hours at Gilmer. I would take him for walks through woods just out of town and inevitably return with a sore arm because of his nudging insistence that I continually throw sticks for him. He was amazingly good at finding them in the thickest brush. Nothing stood in his way. At least, almost nothing.

So far, all of the true Labrador characteristics were there: his 75 pound build, his black coat, and his ability to watch a thrown ball or stick, never to take his eye off, until, given a hand signal, to dash unfalteringly to the "dead bird." Something was missing, though, and that was the urge to swim.

Sure, he loved the water. For hours he would splash his way down mountain streams or dig vehemently at a root stretching into the water at a pond's edge. But if his belly touched the water, out he was in a flash, vigorously shaking mud over anyone within reach. Throw a stick into the water for him, he would jump out three or four feet, watch the bobbing stick, but never would he venture more.

Gail and I were married, Carole moved to Oregon, leaving Homer to stay with us. It was not until then, after he was going on two years, that Homer swam. We had tried everything except throwing him in bodily which, because of his size and strength, we couldn't have done anyway. We took him to the lake to swim; he would only run around the edge, splashing the few sun-glassed bathers along the bank. I swam out, holding the other end of the stick Homer always seems to have in his mouth, and after much tempting and coaxing, he slowly came in, swam behind me, trying to climb on my back. Realizing that was useless, he rushed back to shore, only to swim out again and again. From then on, nothing short of six inches of ice could keep Homer out of the water. Another true Labrador characteristic was realized.

Though it was his first swim, it was a strong and a sure swim. I had but to grab his tail to get a free excursion around the lake. Never again would water thwart his stick chasing. Indeed, that was the best place in the world to chase a stick.

When I saw Homer in Gilmer that first night, little did I know that he would eventually become my constant companion. When I first taught him to retrieve paper balls and finally coaxed him beyond shoulder-deep water, I still had no idea that it would lead further. I didn't hunt ducks, nor did I expect to.

Last fall, when we moved to Giles County and the new landlord said we could count the ducks on the New River from our front porch, it made little impression. Little did I know that Homer would change that.

I agreed to go hunting on the river with a fellow student, and we decided to take Homer along, not for his attributes as a retriever, because he didn't know a duck from a used tennis ball, but at least he would add some warmth to the blind. Homer sat unbelievingly yet patiently as Bob threw out the decoys, and began to doubt our sanity only after we sat down behind our driftwood blind, no protection whatsoever from the drizzle.

When Bob downed his first duck, it took not a small amount of ingenuity to alert Homer to his task. The duck was much too far out for us to wade, and it would soon be in the current. I threw a stick out beyond the duck. Homer immediately plunged in, swam past the duck which bobbed in his wake, picked up the stick and hastily returned with a wag and a wet shake. This time I threw a rock. Again with a splash, Homer swam out, pushed the duck to one side, but for the life of him, just couldn't find that rock. Around in circles he swam, until my yelling "pick it up, pick it up," finally persuaded him to pick up the nearest thing in sight. Back he came, dropped the duck at our feet, and a pat on the head and a "good dog" were the finishing touch on Homer's schooling. It took no more lessons. Homer knew.

After fulfilling his call for ducks Homer swims peacefully at his New River hunting site.

Since that first real "dead bird," Homer has known the meaning of his command. But it was not because of my teaching that he knew. No, neither by my design, nor by chance did Homer learn what he did. It was in his blood. Homer is a Lab, through and through.

Public Hunting Expands Use of State Park Lands

By C. H. SHAFFER
Game Management Field Coordinator

Commission photo by Kesteloo

FOR many years sportsmen and wildlife managers had been ogling land controlled and adminstered by other agencies. For example, much park land seemed to provide desirable game habitat, but this land was always taboo—off limits to men with dogs and guns. Now, through a relatively new policy, the Virginia Division of parks has opened portions of seven State Parks to public hunting. Over 14,000 acres of park lands were hunted in 1970-71 without serious incidents.

The logical marriage between parks and wildlife management started in 1964 when details were worked out for a cooperative project on the Clinch Mountain Wildlife Management Area in Southwest Virginia. Here on an 18,000-acre area that featured pay-as-you-go trout fishing, the Virginia Division of Parks and the Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries entered into an agreement whereby 20 campsites, water and sanitary facilities would be provided for campers. The unique feature of the project was that the camping facilities were financed by the Division of Parks on land belonging to the Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries. From 1964 through the end of 1970 a grand total of 12,583 campers utilized this cooperative camping facility.

The next cooperative venture between the sister agencies took place on Fairy Stone State Park in Patrick and Henry Counties. In this same region the Game Commission had earlier purchased a public hunting area known as Fairystone Farms, and had a cooperative agreement with the Corps of Engineers on lands around Philpott Reservoir. This situation was naturally confusing to the public since the lands of three separate agencies (two State and one Federal) were all in the same territory, interspersed and intertwined. On the Philpott Reservoir and Game Commission lands hunting was permissible, but never on State Park administered land. Recognizing that the peak use of the park land was prior to Labor Day, before the hunting season started, and that a portion of the park was not intensively developed, State Park officials offered the Game Commission a 2,100-acre portion of Fairy Stone Park for public hunting. A cooperative wildlife management agreement was enacted between the two agencies, and soon hunters were able to hunt freely in this previously off-limits territory. The area offers some of the best deer and squirrel hunting in that region.

Soon another cooperative agreement was worked out in Amelia County on the Civil War historic site known as Sayer's Creek. This farm, though small in size—200 acres, provided limited small game hunting to area sportsmen. Here again, the posted signs were taken down and the official Game Commission "public hunting and fishing permitted" signs were substituted.

In recent years the Division of Parks has embarked on an extensive land acquisition program aimed at obtaining land for future recreational areas throughout the Commonwealth. Unfortunately, with only limited funds available, there was not enough money for both purchase and development. Since real estate values are climbing rapidly, it was decided to acquire land first and develop later when adequate funds are allocated.

One of the State's most desirable, high potential recreation areas is the region around Virginia Beach, the Atlantic Ocean and Back Bay. Recreationists have always been fascinated by surf, sand and wetlands. The Division of Parks was able to obtain a tract of land south of the Back Bay National Waterfowl Refuge on the barrier beach, known as Barbours Hill. This 800-acre area had served as a private waterfowl hunting club for many years. After obtaining this sandy area between the ocean and Back Bay, Park Division officials once again entered into a cooperative agreement with the Game Commission. In exchange for the Commission's managing the land on a temporary basis until funds become available for Park development, waterfowl hunters were permitted to hunt in blinds administered by Game Commission personnel. During the past two hunting seasons, 1969-70 and 1970-71, waterfowl hunters harvested numerous ducks and geese on a controlled basis. The Barbours Hill waterfowl management and development became part of the Pocahontas-Trojan public hunting complex which has become so popular during recent years in Back Bay. It is anticipated that the Barbours Hill area will be expanded considerably since the Division of Parks has recently

purchased an adjacent one thousand acres known as False Cape.

Prior to the 1970-71 hunting season, Virginia sportsmen received another big bonus. First, Parks officials collaborated with the Virginia Division of Forestry and the Game Commission in opening a large portion of Pocahontas State Forest and Park to public hunting. Soon afterwards a cooperative agreement was enacted between Game Commission and the Division of Parks on three additional areas: Smith Mountain Lake State Park in Bedford County, York River State Park in James City County, and the panhandle peninsula portion of Occoneechee State Park in Mecklenburg County.

The opening of portions of Pocahontas State Forest and Park to hunting for the first time was a true test of the new park management philosophy. Since Pocahontas Forest and Park are located in the suburban region of Chesterfield County, adjacent to Richmond, the potential number of sportsmen who would utilize the open areas was somewhat awesome. However, officials of the cooperating agencies carefully planned procedures and then worked cooperatively to inform the public on the rules and regulations adopted for the area. Since there were considerable recreational developments in the central portion of Pocahontas Park, this section was designated as a Game Sanctuary and was posted accordingly. The portions of both the Forest and Park to be opened for public hunting were also marked. These amounted to approximately 4,000 acres north and south of the game sanctuary. All three agencies collaborated to inform the public prior to the opening of the season. Parking areas were established on the peripheries of the main hunting areas, and a special game warden was assigned to patrol and assist in regulating the hunting.

Everything was ready for the anticipated influx of hunters, and the administrators had their fingers crossed. This would be the acid test of multiple use of a park area by hunters.

In retrospect, a minor miracle may seem to have occurred. There was no way of knowing exactly how many individuals hunted the Pocahontas State Forest and Park, since hunters were not checked in and out daily. An indication of the heavy utilization by hunters was the fact that approximately 5,000 State Forest Stamps were sold in Chesterfield County and Richmond during 1970. The stamp, however, entitles sportsmen to hunt the other State Forests in the Piedmont (Buckingham-Appomattox, Cumberland and Prince Edward), so possibly not all the 5,000 hunters utilized Pocahontas. The harvest, estimated by analyzing check station cards, was 61 deer and 3 bearded turkeys. The game harvest was not the important issue, though. More importantly, thousands of mandays of healthy outdoor recreation were provided to Virginians on land previously closed to this type of activity. The really big story that should be emphasized here is that sportsmen lived up to their names. There were no reports of accidents, forest fires, or vandalism, and very few game law violations. Officials of all three agencies involved were delighted with the excellent cooperation by the individuals who used the area. The significant point is that if an established park such as Pocahontas, located close to urban populations, can be opened successfully to hunting without interfering with the main purpose of the area, then it logically follows that other parks can be opened to hunting and other multiple-use in less populated regions.

Virginia sportsmen can be grateful to the officials of the Department of Conservation and Economic Development, Division of Parks, for breaking long-established precedents in permitting hunting access to portions of State Park land. By practicing true multiple use of Park property, they have broken the ice and proved it can be done. The 14,000 acres of land administered by the Division of Parks in seven regions of Virginia have provided a tremendous amount of recreation for those who enjoy the dog, the gun and the chase in the fall of the year, and without detriment to the interests of those who enjoy other forms of park-oriented recreation.

Official Game Commission "public hunting and fishing permitted" signs replace former "no hunting" signs around many State Park acres.

Commission photo by Kesteloo

Photo by Leonard Lee Rue III

GEESE

By DONALD S. WILLCOX
Richmond

IT was Thanksgiving Day when we loaded the car and headed for Reedville, a warm, rainy Thanksgiving Day and not very promising for duck hunting. But destination was legendary Tangier Island in the Chesapeake Bay. Adventure into the unknown lay ahead. Excitement was hard to control. The passenger boat to the Island was to meet us dock side at a cat-food house in Reedville at 3:00 p.m., but we couldn't find such a house at the appointed hour. Finally the boat arrived at a more respectable pier, and the six of us hauled aboard a mountain of luggage, guns, shells, cameras, boots, binoculars, potables, and all the impedimenta of the traveling hunting man. For some unlikely reason I was reminded of the small craft taking off from England across the Channel in 1941 for Dunkirk where the British troops were trapped on the beach.

The crossing was an adventure in itself except for disappointed eyes straining at the windows for the few ducks flying in the Bay. The skipper's name was Angle, a native Islander, dubbed "Angel" by many before us depending upon what they were going for or getting away from. We counted ourselves in both categories.

Aboard there was much talk of saltwater diving ducks versus the freshwater variety, full choke guns versus modified or polychoke, number 2 shells for geese, and 4, 5, or 6 for ducks, which was all "finally settled" the next day when Kenny Pruitt, our veteran guide, said that he always used 4's in a full choke automatic.

Unlike China cross the Bay, Tangier hove gradually into view. Boats, buoys, crab pots, fish nets and sturdy piers made the scenery. Tangier was settled in the 17th century, and its people have followed the sea, and the sea only, for over 300 years. There is no industry or agriculture as we know it. The 950 natives are mostly Methodists and legal residents of Virginia with a town council and mayor. The water system is supplied by four artesian wells, and the ladies are excellent cooks, which probably explains why they usually don't have a doctor on the island.

Captain Angle brought us swiftly through the narrow channel. Willing hands met us at the dock. "Welcome to Tangier" was the only thing Kenny Pruitt said as he set about doing what had to be done. Gear aboard a strange and curious vehicular contraption, we walked along the anachronously littered street to our lodging. (Litter, of course, should not be on this Shangri-La, but people and civilizations sometimes get mixed up.)

Other hunters were just coming into the warm, comfortable boarding house. No drinks were allowed, except in the room. Supper was at 6:00 p.m. and it was elegant . . . big platters of clam fritters and crab cakes, homemade hot rolls and butter, corn pudding, and the best turkey, oyster stuffing, and gravy you ever tasted!

Sleep was a problem the first night. A walk around the flat, mysterious, wind swept island took only twelve minutes. Flickering lights in the distance might be the Eastern Shore of Maryland, or a mission bound destroyer, or Mars. Finally to bed and a fitful sleep.

 (Continued from page 11)

We didn't need any alarm clocks to wake us at 4:30 a.m., eat a conventional and perfect breakfast, and be on the pier at 5:30 a.m. full loaded to meet the guides. It was cold and dark going out to the blinds in the 18 foot skiff with a 35 horsepower outboard wide open. Wind and spray made you glad you had your foul weather gear on. We passed the last channel marker hours ago it seemed. Finally we slowed down and stopped about 100 yards from what appeared to be a blind. And we were less than 1,000 yards from an island. The water was hip boot depth, and 25 goose decoys and 72 ducks, mostly pintail and widgeon, were quickly put out in a long line curving into the blind. Although we were on broad salt water, big flights of pintail, blacks, widgeon, and other puddle ducks stayed in the area all winter. No canvasback or redhead decoys were included in the spread. It was too early for these traditional late-comers. Soon we would know, for the first glow of sunrise appeared on the horizon.

The ritual of the decoys behind us, we eased into the boat-hide, not a blind as most marsh duck hunters know it, but a rectangle of myrtle branches stuck in the bottom of the bay. Shooting with three men in a boat is not comfortable, but we weren't looking for comfort. And it was cold as the rear end of an Alaskan well digger.

The sound of whistling wings on wind-swept bays took over. A lone, loudly honking goose flew by before we could load the guns. And then . . . and then there they were, a flight of pintails buzzing the decoys just out of range! Pruitt gave just one call with his mouth, a low whistling sound the pintails make. "Get down, get down," he stage-whispered, as if he were talking to amateurs. On the third pass, after occasional coaxing from Pruitt, they came right in . . . the moment of truth! There were eight of them, three of us. Guns came up and swung in unison; it was pass shooting—and the barrage downed two ducks. They tumbled out of the sky and hit the water with a big splash. What a time for a retriever! But there was only room for us, so we quickly picked up the ducks and came back.

Then came a lull. Nobody had thought to bring coffee, and before it got downright miserable, somebody said, "Geese!" Sure enough, there was the sound, and close, too! Adrenalin in the heart muscle! No time to put 2's in the gun. "Stay still. Be quiet. Stay down." Geese are the wariest. You could see them now, seven big Canadas, over Smith Island, low and coming right at us! Long necks were stretched against the wind. All of a sudden they flared off to the right. "Damn it! I'll have a heart attack. No, wait, they are responding to Kenny's call. Look at 'em turn. Yeah, they're coming back! They're setting their wings!" And all the time giving that urgent, sweet, growly call that makes a duck hunter so nervous he doesn't know whether to shoot or applaud. In they came in all their majesty, just over the outer edge of the decoys. Pruitt at the stern of the boat fired and dropped one. Cox at the bow emptied his "over-and-under." "Blam-yi, blam-yi" . . . and got another. And that was it—Valhalla for the proud rulers of the skies. You felt a twinge of regret, but only for a moment. What a trophy! A big gander—maybe 10 to 12 pounds.

Back in the blind, we began the post mortem. He who missed all three shots with his pump gun, naturally said we shot too soon. So did I. (Some excuse is better than none, and waterfowl hunters have them by the legion.) The ducks and geese prepare all spring and summer in Canada to make the long flight South. The hunter plans, and prepares, and sweats, and cusses, and sometimes makes it out to the blinds. And the gun is fired at the moving birds and sometimes one moving pellet hits one moving bird.

Icy grey clouds were scudding before the wind. Whitecaps were forming out in the bay. And you could hear the shrill cry of the sea gulls feeding around the sand bar off to the left. It was a perfect day. You could feel it in your bones.

"Why is it," said the purist, "that the canvasback is called the king of ducks when he'll decoy with a brass band playing the 1812 Overture? Sure he's the biggest and fastest flying, but I've seen a drake do a hairpin turn and come right back to the watery grave he just escaped."

"I dunno," mumbled the pragmatic Pruitt, "but blacks and geese are the smartest. People include teal and bufflehead, but that's just because they're small, fast-flying and hard to hit."

"People?" asked the wiseacre.

It was a perfect day. Everybody was getting a little chilled and suffering all the pleasure they could muster. Hands come out of wet gloves into pockets. Icy rain and treacherous snowflakes played their dual role. Friend they were for the nonce, and foe once the sun set down. It wasn't like back home. You couldn't wait till the last moment, what with all that water between you and dry land. We were waiting for one last shot. We were hoping for a cap to the climax—geese, or brant, or canvasback. The minutes ticked by. It would be a shaky-do, as the Australians used to say, to pick up 97 decoys in the dark and head back against the wind.

"Why are't they flying?" said Gore. And no sooner said, then, "Big ducks off to the right!"

"Brant," whispered Pruitt. Three of them were barreling in through the mist. You could see their short, black necks and white undersides as they veered upward over the decoys, a perfect shot. One good hunter, by himself under less chilling conditions, could have gotten all three. The three of us, suddenly warm with excitement, fired at the first two, and got them both. The third flew off triumphantly. It was a fitting climax.

We helped Kenny pull in the decoys along with the brant which must have weighed three pounds apiece, and then snuggled down in the boat as best we could, shivering and hoping the motor would start. It did, and we roared off into the freezing rain and wind, huddled against our collars. This time Pruitt would have to make it by himself. The lights of Tangier were the end of the rainbow. And Marco Polo was heading home.

VIRGINIA WILDLIFE ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

CONSERVATIONGRAM

Commission Activities and Late Wildlife News . . . At A Glance

$45,000 IN BOAT REFUNDS SPURS FACILITY CONSTRUCTION. Some $45,000 was credited to the Motorboat Fund during the 1970-71 Fiscal Year as Game Commission's share of boating gasoline tax refunds. The 1970 General Assembly decreed that 1-1/2¢ of each gallon's tax refunded would go into the boating fund and the remaining 5-1/2¢ would be returned to the boater claiming the refund. To qualify for the refunds, the boaters must purchase gasoline in minimum quantities of 5 gallons, must obtain receipts for each purchase, and must file for the refund within 12 months.

The extra funds are already being channeled into boating facility projects but since the amount to be received from this source was unknown until recently, budgetary machinery is just now getting in motion to make maximum use of the new monies. A significant portion of the funds were used in the Willoughby Bay landing project in Norfolk. Some $10,000 was used to upgrade ramps on Commission owned lakes across the state. Improvements of access facilities at Red Bank and Oyster in Northampton County will claim around $15,000. Other projects now underway include ramps on Nomini Creek in Westmoreland County.

Boaters should note a sharp increase in the number of these facilities constructed and an improvement in the quality of the projects. Plans are also in the mill to use some of the new monies for improved boating publications.

Officials feel that less than half of eligible boaters bother to claim gasoline tax refunds. Thus if more boaters would apply for tax refunds, a great deal of additional revenue could be obtained for these programs and the boater could realize a 5-1/2¢ per gallon cash rebate.

FISH RECOVERY OPERATION BIG SUCCESS. Some 4,000 largemouth bass from 8 inches to 3 pounds and 20,000 big bluegills were recovered by the Game Commission from Lake Meriwether on the Boy Scout reservation near Goshen Pass and transferred to Lake Willis Robertson in Rockbridge County. The Commission made arrangements to salvage the fish from the 300 acre lake when it was learned that it had to be drained in order to make repairs to spillway gates. An additional 2,000 bass and 10,000 bluegill were recovered and stocked in Lake Nelson, and a similar quantity were put in Lake Shenandoah. More adult game fish were stashed temporarily at Marion Fish Cultural Station to be stocked in other state lakes later this fall. As a bonus, over a ton of suckers were obtained to feed brood muskies over the winter.

A great number of bass, bluegill, and catfish were released into the Maury River in Goshen Pass along with some nice chain pickerel and suckers. Fishing is expected to be good in this public section of the river this fall. Lake Willis Robertson now is scheduled to open to public angling in the spring of 1972. The stocking of these adult fish made the normal 12 to 18 month wait for the stocked fish to reach legal size unnecessary.

DEER VIRUS STRIKES IN VIRGINIA. A little known virus disease may have hit deer herds in 5 southeastern states causing heavy mortality during recent weeks, reports Dr. Frank Hayes of the Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study unit at Athens, Georgia. In Virginia, some 45 deer were found dead by field workers in James City county, who estimate that between 180 and 200 perished in the area.

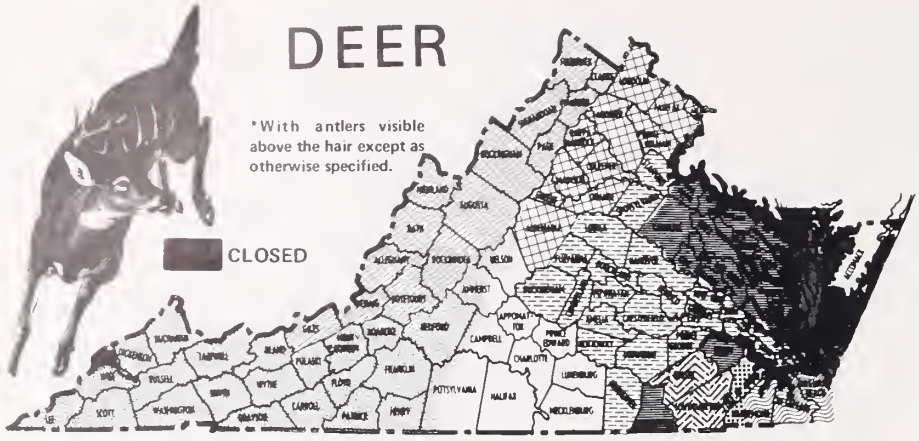
"It has all the earmarks of Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease," said Dr. Hayes, "which is thought to be transmitted by biting insects and capable of causing widespread mortality". Initial diagnosis was prussic acid poisoning from eating Johnson grass, but the similar occurrences in neighboring states prompted the virus theory although positive laboratory evidence of the disease has not been obtained from Virginia herds.

The James City instance is the only report of mysterious deer deaths in Virginia to date that could possibly be linked to the disease. "The first good frost will kill the insects which transmit the disease and the threat should be over," said Dr. Hayes. All outbreaks reported to date have been in areas with abnormally high deer populations, which seem to favor spread of the disease.

The Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study is funded by Game Departments in the 11 southeastern states and has the support of outstanding specialists in the United States and Canada in investigating such disease outbreaks. The Animal Health Divisions of the U. S. and the Virginia Departments of Agriculture have been called in on the problem and have pledged assistance and offered the use of diagnostic facilities.

DEER

*With antlers visible above the hair except as otherwise specified.



CLOSED

November 15 - 27—One deer* per license year, bucks only.

November 15 - 27—One deer* per license year, either sex on the last day only

November 15 - January 5—Two deer* per license year, one of which may be antlerless on the last day only

November 15 - January 5—Two deer* per license year, one of which may be antlerless on the last 12 hunting days only

November 15 - January 5—Two deer* per license year, one of which may be antlerless

November 15 - January 5—Two deer* per license year, bucks only

November 15 - January 5—Two deer* per license year, one of which may be antlerless on the last 3 hunting days only

October 1 - November 30—Two deer* per license year, bucks only

November 10 - January 5—Two deer per license year, one of which may be antlerless on the last 12 hunting days

1971-72 Hun

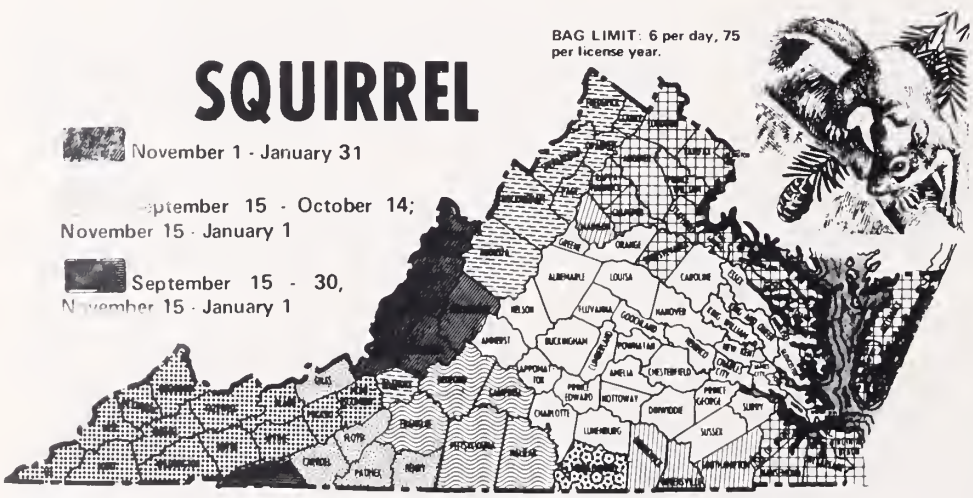
Novem

November 1 - Janu

October 1 - Novemb

SQUIRREL

BAG LIMIT: 6 per day, 75 per license year.



November 1 - January 31

September 15 - October 14; November 15 - January 1

September 15 - 30, November 15 - January 1

October 1-14, November 1 - January 31

November 15 - January 31

September 15 - 30, November 15 - January 31

MILITARY AREAS

A.P. HILL - September 15 - October 31, November 15 - January 31

CAMP PICKETT - October 15 - January 31

QUANTICO - October 1-14, November 15 - January 31.

October 1-14, November 15 - January 31

September 15 - October 14, November 15 - January 31

September 15 - 30, November 1 - January 31

September 1 - 15, November 15 - January 31

November 1 - Dec
ONE HEN PERM

November 1 - Dec
GOBBLERS ON

November 15 - De
GOBBLERS ON

ng Regulations

BEAR

December 31 - Statewide except as listed below.

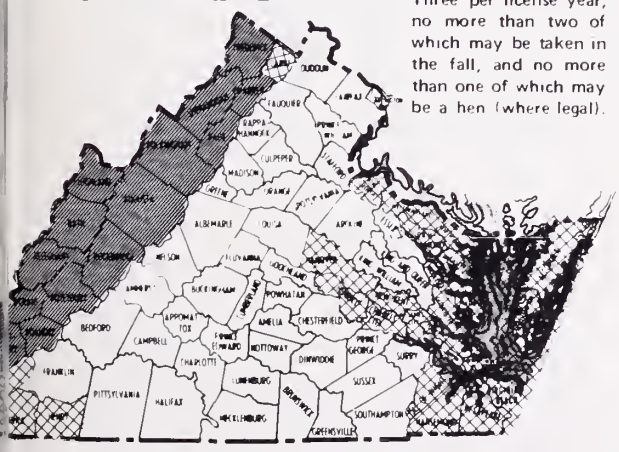
November 10 - January 5

Bag Limit——One per license year at least 75 pounds live weight.

TURKEY

BAG LIMIT

Three per license year, no more than two of which may be taken in the fall, and no more than one of which may be a hen (where legal).



CLOSED TO FALL TURKEY HUNTING

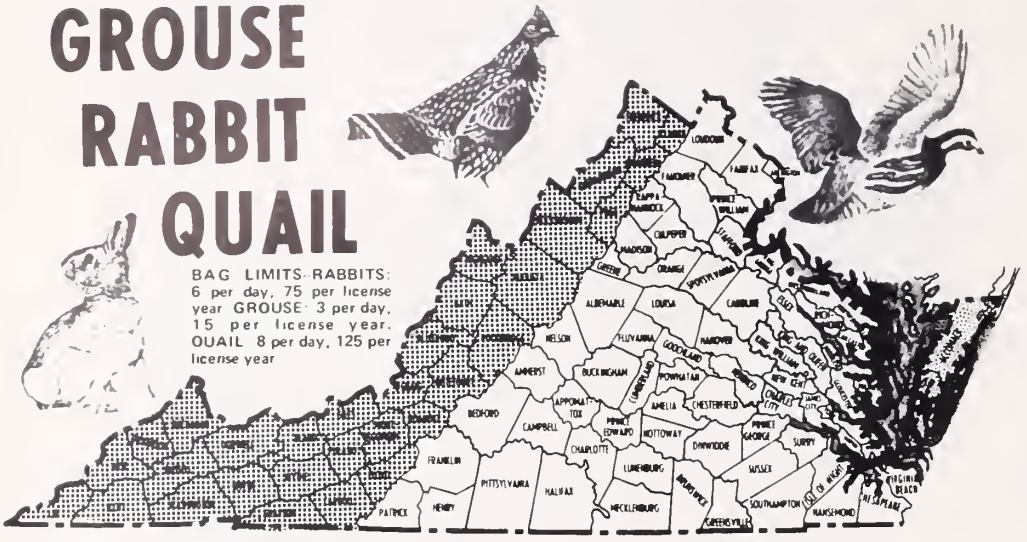
CLOSED TO ALL TURKEY HUNTING

VIRGINIA BIG GAME KILL RECORDS

County or City	1968-1969 Deer	Bear	Turkey	1969-1970 Deer	Bear	Turkey	1970-1971 Deer	Bear	Turkey
Accomack	84			96			103		
Albemarle	392	18	13	417	14	24	377	22	22
Alleghany	705	32	176	801	8	280	852	39	203
Amelia	350		6	511		24	789		33
Amherst	141	7	10	185	8	26	187	9	17
Appomattox	195		8	264		15	286		9
Augusta	942	54	360	1,245	51	468	1,221	21	539
Bath	1,544	14	476	1,962	10	651	1,881	16	692
Bedford	74	11	6	103	13	5	136	9	8
Bland	190	8		224	10		221	2	0
Botetourt	762	20	292	946	13	290	922	31	233
Brunswick	288		4	412		8	297		10
Buchanan									44
Buckingham	658		34	756		55	1,324	2	
Campbell	42		3	42		9	63		5
Caroline	1,032		11	1,256		25	1,325		30
Carroll	44			32			34		0
Charles City	281			367			489		0
Charlotte	45		9	73		11	61		14
Chesapeake-Norfolk	203	9		228	4		198	8	
Chesterfield	372		7	405		21	651	0	31
Clarke	106			103			71		
Craig	789	17	194	871	4	196	873	7	174
Culpeper	108		6	120		5	158		12
Cumberland	357		6	481		26	745		22
Dickenson	9			6			6		
Dinwiddie	360		3	434		19	779		30
Essex	121		4	169			156		0
Fairfax	4		4	22		3	3		2
Fauquier	324		25	373		41	403	0	32
Floyd	24			31			31		0
Fluvanna	988		10	925		15	987		9
Franklin	95			60			88		0
Frederick	550		265	596	1	245	511	1	226
Giles	433	11	91	600	7	260	521	4	144
Gloucester	211			261			239		
Goochland	227		12	263		20	303		16
Grayson	212			296			360		0
Greene	32	6		35	18		58	19	0
Greensville	272			255			317		0
Halifax	76		2	130		13	139		14
Hanover	118			123			193		0
Henrico	73			110			133		0
Henry	5			2			1		0
Highland	672	10	260	897	14	408	780	7	439
Isle of Wight	303			322			398		0
James City	229			234			223		0
King & Queen	239		12	277		12	288		26
King George	333			398			304		0
King William	371			372		4	416		12
Lancaster	312			293			228		
Lee	37			38			65		
Loudoun	148		2	247		17	228		13
Louisa	285		31	270		23	472		28
Lunenburg	90		3	132		7	126		9
Madison	32	14		25	13		34	21	0
Mathews	71			57			65		
Mecklenburg	46			55			79		2
Middlesex	75			78			84		
Montgomery	20		115	38		134	41	0	91
Nansemond	251	1		318	1		286	4	0
Nelson	126	14	11	123	9	9	159	13	25
New Kent	293			348			449		0
Newport News-Hampton	252			211			213		0
Northampton							000	00	0
Northumberland	344			337			309		
Nottoway	246		9	324		6	595		4
Orange	142		7	144		15	167	0	13
Page	206	18	27	285	9	52	312	14	48
Patrick	140			185	1		180	0	0
Pittsylvania	72		8	106		13	133		17
Powhatan	303		8	423		21	689		26
Prince Edward	101		12	143		9	188		10
Prince George	354		1	392		6	803		9
Prince William	286		13	342		25	460		24
Pulaski	132			128			124	3	
Rappahannock	86	2		347	2		207	9	0
Richmond	220			183			198		
Roanoke	18		51	19		57	25	1	22
Rockbridge	555	17	255	724	8	333	728	9	246
Rockingham	1,216	41	143	1,595	43	231	1,593	29	299
Russell	12			23			11		
Scott	52			70			54		
Shenandoah	707	4	252	877	2	307	826	9	235
Smyth	235	3		302	5		314	3	0
Southampton	1,379			1,742			2,153		0
Spotsylvania	208		12	266		17	260	1	15
Stafford	309		18	404		5	712		10
Surry	325			640			743		0
Sussex	965			1,067			1,280		0
Tazewell	56	4		76	9		55	5	0
Va. Beach	24			27			30		0
Warren	236	1	74	375	2	68	338	7	59
Washington	104	1		133			97	0	0
Westmoreland	120			124			119		
Wise	11			20			16		
Wythe	279	5		307	4		343	1	0
York	561			700			646		0
TOTALS	28,027	342	3,361	34,154	283	4,534	38,138	326	4,253

Turkey harvest figures do not include spring kills.

GROUSE RABBIT QUAIL



BAG LIMITS-RABBITS: 6 per day, 75 per license year GROUSE 3 per day, 15 per license year. QUAIL 8 per day, 125 per license year

November 15 - January 31 (Rabbits & Grouse); November 15 - February 15 (Quail) - East of the Blue Ridge except Accomack and Northampton counties (see below).

November 1 - January 31 - (Rabbits & Quail); November 1 - February 28 (Grouse) West of the Blue Ridge.

November 15 - January 15 (Rabbits); November 15 - February 15 (Quail) in Accomack and Northampton counties.

PHEASANT—November 15-16

BAG LIMIT—One cock Bird per day.

Birds must be carried to the *nearest* checking station where an official pheasant tag will be attached. ***(This is an experimental season to determine distribution and establishment of these game birds so accurate reporting of kills is extremely important)***

RACCOON

September 1 - March 31

October 15 - February 28

October 1 - March 10

October 15 - January 31

ON NATIONAL FORESTS COMMISSION OWNED LANDS

WEST of the Blue Ridge - November 1 - January 5.

EAST of the Blue Ridge - November 15 - January 31

BAG LIMIT 2 per day on National Forest

WATERFOWL

Hours: One half hour before sunrise until sunset each day.

DUCKS, COOTS AND GALLINULES

General Season: November 20-January 18

Sea ducks—September 25-November 19 in designated waters (see Special Sea Duck Season)

Gallinules: November 20-January 15

DAILY BAG LIMITS

DUCKS—3 per day including no more than 1 canvasback or redhead, 2 wood ducks and one black duck.

BLUEWING TEAL BONUS—During the first 9 calendar days of the season, hunters may take 2 bluewing teal in addition to the above limit.

SCAUP BONUS—In the designated portion of Chesapeake Bay (see Bonus Scaup Area), hunters may take 2 scaup daily in addition to the above limits.

MERGANSERS—5 per day including no more than 1 hooded merganser.

SEA DUCKS—(Scoters, eiders and old squaws) 7 per day combined during special and regular seasons.

COOTS—10 daily

GALLINULES—15 daily

GEESE AND BRANT

STATEWIDE (Except Back Bay) November 15-January 22

DAILY BAG LIMIT (Except Back Bay) 3 Canada geese and 6 brant

BACK BAY ONLY—(See Special Back Bay Area) November 20-January 8.

DAILY BAG LIMIT—1 Canada goose and 6 brant

SPECIAL BACK BAY AREA

The special goose season and limit apply to Back Bay and its tributaries and the marshes adjacent thereto, and the land and marshes between Back Bay and the Atlantic Ocean from Sandbridge to the North Carolina line, and the shores of North Landing River and marshes adjacent thereto and along the shores of Lake Tecumseh and Red Wing Lake and the marshes adjacent thereto.

SPECIAL SEA DUCK SEASON AREA

The ocean waters of the City of Virginia Beach below the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, seaward of U. S. Route 60 and of Back Bay and its tributaries, the tidal waters of Northampton and Accomack Counties, and the Chesapeake Bay and each of its tributaries up to the first highway bridge, but exclusive of that portion of the Chesapeake Bay known generally as Pocomoke Sound bounded by a line beginning on the western shore of Smiths Island and extending southeastward to the southwest shore of the hook of Tangier Island, and thence extending easterly to the southern tip of Parkers Marsh at the mouth of Onancock Creek. The highways with bridges making up the west boundary are: Route No. 644 and No. 200 in Northumberland County, Route No. 3 from Kilmarnock in Lancaster County to Middlesex County, Route No. 3 in Middlesex and Mathews Counties, Route No. 3 and No. 17 in Gloucester County to York County, Route No. 17 in York County, and Route No. 17 and Interstate No. 64 in Newport News and Hampton.

Hunting of waterfowl within 800 yards of any shore, island or emergent vegetation is prohibited during this special sea duck season. However, these species may be hunted elsewhere during that portion of the special season that coincides with the regular duck season.

BONUS SCAUP AREA

In addition to the basic limits on ducks other than mergansers a bonus daily bag limit of 2 and a possession limit of 4 scaup when taken in the tidal waters of Accomack and Northampton Counties and the waters of the Chesapeake Bay bounded on the west by the first upstream bridges of the tributaries of the Chesapeake Bay and on the south by the Hampton Roads Tunnel, Route No. 60 and the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. The highways, with bridges, making up the west boundary are: Routes No. 644 and No. 200 in Northumberland County, Route No. 3 in Middlesex and Mathews Counties, Route No. 3 and No. 17 in Gloucester County to York County, Route No. 17 in York County and Route No. 17 and Interstate No. 64 in Newport News and Hampton.

POSSESSION LIMITS

After opening day hunters may have two daily bag limits of all species in their possession with the exception of canvasbacks, redheads and brant, of which only one daily bag limit may be in possession. No one is allowed to have more than one daily bag limit of game in his possession while in the forests, fields or waters of this state.

A CENTURY OF FISH CONSERVATION

By BEN SCHLEY

WHEN President U. S. Grant signed the U.S. Fish Commission into existence on a February day in 1871, he couldn't have been aware of the long term importance of his action. Now, as the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife of the Department of the Interior—one of two successors to the Commission—recognizes its centennial year, it seems appropriate to review some of the events which led to piscatorial programs of today.

Spencer Fullerton Baird, formerly a professor at Dickinson College in Pennsylvania, and, at that time, Assistant Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, was picked to head the new agency. Designating Baird as Commissioner of Fish and Fisheries, the President directed him to study the decrease of food fishes of seacoasts and lakes of the United States and to suggest remedies.

Baird was a naturalist of considerable reputation, a qualified scientist, energetic and personable. In fact, the Encyclopedia Britannica credits Baird with being "perhaps the most representative general man of science in America" in his day.

While continuing to work for the Smithsonian, Baird apparently had no hesitancy in accepting responsibilities as the Commissioner of Fish and Fisheries, even though the position carried no salary.

The resolution establishing the Fish Commission, the first significant Federal action for conservation of fishery resources, was passed by Congress five days after it was introduced. The Commissioner promptly got into operation. Headquarters were established at Woods Hole on Cape Cod, Mass., and Baird with a small staff began work to determine the causes of a fisheries decline. At the end of the year, the first of a continuous series of reports was submitted to Congress—852 pages.

Studies were carried on largely through the warmer months, and Baird persuaded many noted scientists to work for the Commission at little or no cost during their vacation. Among those who participated in the summer programs were: A. E. Verrill of Yale, L. Agassiz and W. G. Farlow of Harvard, W. O. Atwater of Wesleyan, and T. Gill of Washington, D.C. Each year a different area was selected for study. All were located along the coast of New England: Eastport and Portland, Maine; Noank, Connecticut; Salem, Gloucester and Provincetown, Massachusetts; and Newport, Rhode Island. At these summer stations research programs were carried out and thousands of specimens of marine life were collected and identified. Later, in 1885 under Baird's direction, the first fishery research laboratory was built at Woods Hole. Modernized in 1960, it remains one of the foremost oceanographic laboratories in the world.

When Baird took office in 1871, propagation of trout and other fishes was in its infancy but had captured the imagination of a segment of the population intent on improving the stocks of sport and food fish. Introduction of native and exotic species of fish to new waters appeared to be an easy way to improve fishing for everyone.

Urged by the American Fish Cultural Association, predecessor to the American Fisheries Society and the country's first professional conservation organization, Congress appropriated $15,000 for propagation of food fishes. Livingston Stone, an early fish culturist, was picked to set up the first Federal freshwater fish hatchery. Stone and his assistants were sent to California to find salmon spawning grounds and establish a hatchery where eggs could be taken and shipped to suitable rivers in an attempt to make these fish available in all of the nation.

Taking eggs from landlocked salmon at Green Lake National Fish Hatchery in 1915. The Green Lake hatchery is being rebuilt as a part of the Atlantic salmon restoration program.

Arriving on the West Coast, Stone contacted California's fish commissioners for information regarding salmon spawning areas. Inquiry turned up a railroad employee who reported seeing Indians spearing salmon in McCloud River just above the mouth of Pit River.

In those days the McCloud was an unspoiled stream with few settlers on its banks. Reporting to Commissioner Baird in 1874, Stone wrote: ". . . The McCloud River presents an instance of what is becoming increasingly rare, at least in the more accessible parts of the country, namely, a region which is just as it was before the white man found it, and with a race of aborigines whose simple habits have not been corrupted by the aggressive influence of communication with the whites."

Eventually Stone's party located spawning sites, though so late in the season that they were able to col-

lect and incubate only a few chinook salmon eggs. Despite this, plus problems with Indians and floods, 30,000 eggs were shipped by train to eastern waters after completion of the first season's operations.

The hatchery on McCloud (later called Baird Station) operated for a number of years, and more than 50 million salmon eggs were shipped from there to all parts of the world—with no real evidence of success except for runs which developed in several rivers in New Zealand. The site of the old hatchery now lies beneath the placid waters of Lake Shasta.

The Baird operation was the first in the National Fish Hatchery System, now the largest hatchery complex in the world, containing nearly 100 stations rearing more than 50 species of fish, plus several fish cultural development centers and hatchery biologist stations.

Turning from salmon operations, Livingston Stone located another hatchery near the mouth of Green Creek, a few miles upstream from Baird station. Here rainbow trout were spawned, their eggs shipped to the east coast and many foreign lands. Introduction of McCloud River trout met with success in many places. In addition to successful introductions over a wide area in the United States, rainbow trout were transplanted to the waters of all continents, in many of which they did as well or better than in their native range.

Another fish introduction was established in 1871 when Seth Green of the California Fish Commission successfully transported 10,000 shad fry from New York's Hudson River to the Sacramento River in California. Hauled overland by train in giant wooden barrels that were constantly aerated in transit, the fragile fry arrived at their destination in excellent shape. Silvery shad thrived in Pacific waters and provide an excellent fishery today.

Eight years later Livingston Stone captured 133 striped bass from the Navesink River in New Jersey, and managed to plant most of them in the Pacific Ocean near Martinez, California. Three years later another transplant was made into West Coast waters. From this small beginning a splendid sport and food fish was added to the list of Pacific coast inhabitants, a fish which still provides thrills for thousands of anglers.

Attempts to introduce Atlantic salmon and shad into the Mississippi River system in the Middle West and South met with little or no success and were soon abandoned.

Perhaps the Commission's greatest success in transplanting, if not in public acclaim, was the introduction of carp. A popular food fish over a great part of Europe, it was introduced to provide a cheap source of food for rural people in the South and Midwest. To provide enough carp for wide distribution, rearing ponds were constructed on the grounds of the Washington Monument and other capital locations. Spurred by initial enthusiasm, the Commission introduced carp into every imaginable body of water. But enthusiasm waned fast as criticism by fishery professionals and the public developed. To this day, the planting of this species is cited as an example of inadequate study prior to the introduction of exotic animals.

After Baird's death in 1889, prime emphasis in the Fish Commission was placed on propagation of various species of game and food fish. Numerous hatcheries were constructed and attempts were made to increase fish populations by stocking small fish. Efforts also continued to increase the range of whitefish, trout, and other species. Much progress was made in cultural methods, the control of disease, and in transportation of live fish as species were transplanted to "new" waters.

In 1903, the Fish Commission, renamed the Bureau of Fisheries, was transferred to the new Department of Commerce and Labor. The same legislation fixed responsibility for supervision and control of the fur seal, salmon, and other Alaskan fisheries in the new Bureau. When Department of Commerce and Labor split into two departments in 1913, the Bureau of Fisheries remained in Commerce.

In 1939-40, the Bureau of Fisheries was joined by the Bureau of Biological Survey of the Department of Agriculture; the resulting Fish and Wildlife Service was placed in Department of the Interior. Though continuing its fisheries activities, other forms of wildlife also became the responsibility of the agency.

In 1956, the Service was split into two agencies: the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife and the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries. In 1970, Commercial Fisheries was renamed National Marine Fisheries Service and placed under the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration of the Department of Commerce. It retained its programs related to management and research of saltwater fish and accepted new responsibilities regarding marine sport fish.

Sport Fisheries and Wildlife remains in the Department of the Interior with continuing responsibility for freshwater fish and wildlife conservation and related research. The national fish hatcheries and fishery research laboratories, fish cultural development centers, and hatchery biologists stations now produce various species of sport and food fishes, test and develop new hatchery equipment and techniques, control and study fish diseases.

In cooperation with State agencies, the Bureau manages fish and wildlife on Federal lands, and in areas where the Federal Government has responsibility. It performs wildlife research, it is responsible for the preservation of endangered species of wildlife, and operates a series of national wildlife refuges. It is the nation's migratory bird agency; it administers funds obtained from excise taxes on fishing tackle and firearms, and acquires land for waterfowl habitat. It provides educational and training opportunities for fish and wildlife professionals and operates environmental education centers and aquariums.

Though President Grant could have had little idea of what the future would bring to the U.S. Fish Commission in the first one hundred years of its existence, he did recognize the importance of our fish resources and created a firm base with which to carry on his trust.

'POSSUM!

By BILL WEEKES
Blacksburg

IF one didn't know better, one would give the gray furry opossum a wide berth—maybe one would even run for the hills.

He's a mean looking critter. He wears a smile that says, "Touch me and you lose a hand." His mouth is full of sharp, little teeth—50 of them to be exact, more than any other land mammal in North America.

His vicious sneer is re-enforced by a particularly ugly visage. His pink nose quivers like a pig's. His eyes look like the beady heads of two lustrous black hat pins that have been shoved into both sides of his head just above his foxy snout. His ears look like two rounded pieces of black rubber stuck atop his head.

Added to his two-foot body is another foot of tail—a hairless ratty appendage.

The opossum looks like nobody's sweetheart.

The singular animal is a common sort. In recent decades his stomping grounds have spread to New England, northwest to Wisconsin and as far west as Los Angeles. In Hollywood alone 1,000 are picked up annually by authorities, not counting the number lost as traffic fatalities.

I recently experienced my first close contact with *Didelphis virginiana.*

A young female had been caught in a trap meant for a fox. I was accompanying the trapper. We both came up on the animal whose foot and tail had been pinned by the jaws of the trap.

"Will she bite if I handle it?" I asked. This showed how much I didn't know about the possum.

I felt the grizzled fur and picked up the lightweight creature and put her back down. She kept her fixed carnivorish grin, her teeth unpleasantly visible through a partially open mouth. She uttered no sound. I carried the animal up the hill away from the trap and put it down. Then a strange thing happened. The animal closed her eyes, still keeping her mouth open, but curled into a fetal position, a position that was meant to say: "I'm dead."

This is one of the animal's oddities. She has catatonic fits. Her respiration decreases. Her body becomes rigid. Death seems to have taken over. In layman's language, the possum plays dead. Scientists, however, have discovered the animal is not pretending; she actually experiences physiological change. This change is brought about by external stimulus—a threat of some sort. This phenomenon, a reaction also reported in foxes, snakes and other reptiles and in some birds, is a protection of a sort inasmuch as an animal will not have much to do with an enemy or prey if it is dead to begin with.

I decided to take the animal home for a closer look. When I took it out of the car and put it down this time, she tried to walk swiftly away, no longer choosing to fall into a death-like trance.

I turned the possum belly-up and looked for her pouch. She hadn't had young yet, so only a white outline of a pouch was visible, but no slit. The possum carries her young, beginning in the fetal stage, in a pouch. This is another oddity of this animal. It makes her a marsupial. The possum is the only marsupial in North America. Australia is the home of two others—kangaroo and koala bear. Tasmania is home of a diminishing marsupial, the Tasmanian wolf.

Baby possums are born only a few days after conception and are so tiny a litter of 12 to 18 could hardly fill a teaspoon. Each must crawl by instinct into the mother's pouch where they live until mouse size.

These animals are omnivorous. They may eat berries, nuts, apples, birds' eggs, young fish, green corn, persimmons, grasshoppers, crickets, squash, stink bugs, beetles, frogs and mice. One report in Michigan disclosed that 80 percent of the possum's food was animal. Authorities even report that the creature seldom swallows seeds of the persimmon fruit which it finds delectable.

In the fall, the time we found our possum in the trap, the animal forages extensively for food. The trap was only a couple of miles from the city. It's not unusual to find them even in towns. Some people even allow these animals into their homes as pets.

Some have said the possum is a dirty animal to have as a pet, but James F. O'Keefe in his book, *The World of the Possum,* reports the animals are clean creatures

(Continued from page 19)

that spend a great deal of time licking and grooming their fur. If they are smelly and dirty, it is because their masters have forced them to stay in dirty places.

O'Keefe reported some possums will growl, hiss or bluff if threatened. My possum did nothing but remain rather static. The animal was sluggish. At night, however, opossums are alert, agile, even quick and may not tolerate handling in the same manner as some do in the daytime.

Possums are great tree climbers, but my female, who had a sore tail and foot, didn't negotiate our ash tree too well. She had difficulty in getting into a comfortable position. The animals hind paws are prehensile, bearing "thumbs" made for gripping branches. These digits show up in the animal's tell-tale star-shaped tracks.

In layman's language the 'possum "plays dead," but scientists have discovered that the animal is not pretending but is subject to catatonic fits brought about by the stress of a threat of some sort.

These "fat hermits of the low woods" are loners. Seldom are two adults seen together, and, after mating season, the male takes off never to be heard of again.

One would think without any visible means of defense other than flashing teeth and a "deathly" disposition that the possum would become extinct, being preyed upon as it is by man, hawks, owls, wolves, bobcats and other carnivores. Yet the possum has several things in its favor—a highly developed sense of smell, a highly sensible habit of laying low during the day and a surprising capacity for healing broken bones.

Some people hunt this unusual being. Some find them good to eat. Some merely find one interesting to watch.

We took her back to the woods, put her down and in about ten minutes, the weird little Great Pretender slowly crept under some honeysuckle and disappeared.

Let's Cook 'Possum

By MARJORIE LATHAM MASSELIN
Richmond

WHEN I first began writing these articles, one of my friends whom I thought not much interested in game, complimented me on them and then in great seriousness proceeded to tell me that I ought to write one on cooking 'possum. He would even be willing, he said, his hand under my elbow to edge me over to a quieter place where we would not be disturbed by others present, to give me a very good recipe he knew for the preparation of an opossum. Half taken in by his lowered tone of voice and half from of the natural curiosity of the cook, I listened. The thing to do, he explained, was to cook the animal with plenty of good sweet potatoes, after which he advised me to throw away the possum and eat the potatoes. I smiled dutifully while he broke up in hysterics. The trouble with jokers is that they always think they originated the joke.

There is really nothing very funny about a possum cooked with sweet potatoes unless you consider how many people never do it. Even then it is not funny-amusing; only funny-strange, or possibly funny-sad. It always stuns me to find how many people simply will *not* try something they have never eaten. "No thanks," they will tell me. "I'm afraid I wouldn't care for *that*." How do they *know?* If one refuses to *taste* a new dish, how can one wrinkle the nose and say, "Oh, I wouldn't like that!"

Now it is true that possum is a very fat meat and that if you fail to get rid of as much fat as possible before entering upon the final preparation, the completed dish will be swimming in grease. But this is true of domestic duck and a good many people eat those. One supposes they roast the duck on a rack and let the grease drain out of it. That is *one* way to eliminate the fat. There are others. With a possibly tough specimen, parboiling is another simple means of cooking out the fats. Spit-roasting is another way to do it. And in many cases, depending on the way you wish to cook the meat, simply peeling off that outer layer of fat is the easiest way of all. The first time I decided to try that method with a duck which I considered otherwise inedible, I was agape at the ease with which that layer of fat came off. Fat, you know, just sits there; it is not attached to anything. Pull it, and it comes off with no trouble at all.

The primary drawback to removing *all* of this outer layer of fat is that it exposes the meat completely. Fat is as much a protection in the cooking process as it is to the living animal on a cold winter night. Without *some* fat, meat is dry and tasteless, and worst of all *tough,*

because fat is also a tenderizing agent. If you have ever tried to broil a hamburger made of completely lean beef, you will understand what I mean. So the point of all this is that, like everything else God gives us, He had a reason for putting fat in a possum.

The best way to cook a possum is to spit-roast it in the open where you have the facilities for arranging to keep the fat out of the fire but are under no obligation to keep it off the kitchen floor. This can be accomplished by preparing a well banked fire of very hot coals and roasting the meat *in front of it*—the way Pioneer Women did it in front of a fireplace. To be *sure* the fat keeps from dripping onto the coals and thereby flaming the meat to a charred cinder, it is well to take another cue from the old-time cooks and set a dripping pan beneath the spit. Lacking a pan of the right size and condition, this can be done by folding heavy duty aluminum foil so it makes a trough.

To enhance the flavor of the meat, the cavity can be stuffed with aromatic vegetables and herbs. These should be chopped, mixed together and stuffed in the possum after which the opening is trussed up like any other stuffed roast. Cooking should be slow and the spit turned continually to assure even browning. The stuffing is usually discarded when serving, although there is no reason not to eat it if you wish. Use onion, celery stalk and tops, carrot and parsley. Turnip or parsnip might be substituted for the carrot or added along with it. The more delicate herbs add little or nothing, but a few spiky leaves of Rosemary or a bit of fresh sage do well.

To go with the roast possum, one should have sweet potatoes, roasted in their skins, and plenty of new apple sauce cooked so that there are chunky pieces of apple still remaining. In other words, use a spoon not a sieve in preparing the apple sauce. Cranberry sauce is good, too, because this meat demands that tartness accompany it. It also demands a green salad made of the more strongly flavored leafy vegetables such as curly endive, escarole, young spinach or chard leaves and the more pungent herbs such as parsley. Dress the salad with cider vinegar and a good *olive oil*. The usual salad oils lack sufficient character for so richly flavored a game animal as possum.

Essentially, 'possum, 'coon, boar are outdoor foods. Everything tastes better out in the open, but this seems especially true of these game animals. However, possum can certainly be prepared in a kitchen. In the event you will be cooking one there, I suggest parboiling as the best means of handling the excess fat. Cook it tender, in water to cover, and add the aromatics suggested above to the cooking water. When it is tender but not falling from the bones, remove from heat and let it cool in the cooking liquid. Chill it, in fact, to congeal the fat which can then be lifted off without difficulty. Transfer the drained possum to a roasting pan and brown it nicely. Instead of sweet potatoes, you might like to substitute corn bread or spoon bread, but the tart sauce and salad discussed above should also go to the table.

Rare Kill in Fluvanna

By WAYNE GENTRY
Fork Union

DEER hunting in rural Fluvanna County has been a favorite pastime of many hunters from throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia for many years. Now, the deer population in Fluvanna has grown to large proportions and the recorded kill is ranking high in the state kill standing each year. With all the deer that are being killed in Fluvanna, probably none will rank with the unusual hunt my father, Mr. M. T. Gentry, and I had exactly one week before the doe season opened on Monday.

Both my father and I had killed a buck earlier in the season—he a 10 pointer and I a spike. On this particular day, Dad wanted to go still hunting, but could not find anyone to go with him. (It is common practice for local Fluvanna hunters to have a partner with them on still hunts.) As it was a nice afternoon to still hunt, the temperature well above freezing, I went along to keep my father company. I did not even carry a gun. We did take Dad's Remington 30-06 with a Weaver 6X scope—a sort of partnership gun. We went to a friend's abandoned farm to watch the fields for bucks. We climbed up into the barn loft to have a better advantage in seeing and for safety in shooting. After milling around for several minutes and discussing Dad's previous kill at the farm earlier in the season, we started watching the honeysuckle fence rows along the edges of the fields for a "rack" to appear.

In no more than ten minutes after we got out of the truck and into the barn, two bucks appeared about 200 yards away at the end of one of the fields around the barn. Dad took aim at the buck nearest him through a hole in the barn wall caused by a fallen board. At the sound of his shot, the buck he was aiming for bolted into the woods. The second buck stood perfectly still. My father then passed the rifle to me, but I could not shoot through the same hole because a tree blocked the view. Not able to get a shot, I ran across the barn, leaned out of the barn door backwards, and shot the second buck offhand. The buck fell to the ground and showed no signs of movement, so we left the barn to see the results of our marksmanship. When we got to the edge of the field, my buck was down just as he had fallen. The bullet had hit the neck and severed several vertebrae, causing instant death. The buck Dad shot was nowhere to be seen. After several minutes of scouting for blood, I found a trail. We located the buck three hundred yards from where he had been hit.

So, two hunters killed two deer with the same gun within thirty seconds and fulfilled their 1970 deer bag limit at the same time. This kill will indeed be discussed in Fluvanna hunting circles for many months to come, and will be remembered always in the Gentry household.

Know Your WARDENS

By F. N. SATTERLEE
Information Officer

Baynard Ulman Miller Amburg has been named Virginia Game Warden of the Year and was sent to the Southeastern Association of Game, Fish and Conservation Commissioners meetings in Charleston, South Carolina, in late October to represent Virginia along with warden representatives from other southeastern states. He was awarded a special plaque and certificate during ceremonies at the final banquet.

Miller worked as a waterman before joining the Game Commission in 1949, and served a hitch with the U.S. Coast Guard during the war. He completed the Virginia Resource-Use Education Council natural resources course at William and Mary in 1964 and graduated from the Dale Carnegie course in Effective Speaking in Human Relations in 1967. He serves as a reporter for the Game Commission's weekly fishing report, sending in weekly summaries of fishing activity and success on the lower tidal Rappahannock. He has trained 349 young hunters in the Game Commission Hunter Safety course.

Miller is married and resides with his wife, Louise, in Amburg. They have two daughters, Jo Anne and Jean. With 22 years experience in the area he serves, Miller is well able to protect its wildlife, effectively patrol its waters, and help the hunters, fishermen and boaters he meets along the way. He has considerable waterfowl hunting activity to keep tabs on, and regularly checks Dragon Swamp for freshwater fishermen.

B. U. MILLER

ERNEST S. YEATTS

Ernest Yeatts, Game Warden Supervisor, is a 24-year veteran with the Virginia Game Commission. He joined the organization in January of 1947 and was assigned as Game Warden for Washington County, a position he held until 1965 when he was promoted to Supervisor for the Daniel Boone District. In this capacity Mr. Yeatts is responsible for the supervision of the warden force which is assigned to the 14 predominantly mountain counties of southwestern Virginia.

Mr. Yeatts feels strongly that fishing and hunting, more than anything else, make people aware of the ecological problems with which we are faced today. For him the single greatest reward of being a warden is when a man 30 to 40 years of age comes to him and says, "You spoke to my high school when I was a student, and I have never forgotten your being there nor the things you said."

Ernest is married to the former Ruby Hutton of Abingdon, Va. The couple have one son, Ernest, Jr., who is a chemistry and mathematics teacher at Holston High School.

ON THE LIGHTER SIDE

By TONY PHOENIX

TRAVELER'S WARNING

NEVER fly with an empty dog crate!

This message should be engraved in a conspicuous place at every major air terminal in the world.

Recently I came back from Canada with a carrier used to ship dogs on airlines. I won't forget it very soon. I hope what I learned may be of help to you.

My problems came about because I sold a dog while I was vacationing in Canada, but did not have the dog with me.

This is not so strange. Dogs have been responsible for some of the most trying moments of my life. They have also been responsible for some of the most enjoyable times—the dark coon hunts and fox hunts, or the explosion of quail under a dog's nose on a frosty November morning.

But back to Canada. A man offered me enough money to almost pay the cost of my vacation if I'd sell him a bird dog pup I had. I needed the money worse than I needed the dog, so I said yes.

I agreed to send the dog by air freight to Canada as soon as I got back to Virginia. The man had a collapsible pet carrier (the dog crate) that he suggested I bring back to the states with me. I could put my luggage in it, he pointed out, and turn right around and ship the dog back to him.

It seemed like a fine idea. The brilliance of the plan began to pale, however, when I approached the Air Canada ticket counter dragging a noisy metal dog crate loaded with luggage.

I thought the agent in charge looked at me with considerably more interest than was necessary just to sell me an airline ticket back to Virginia.

It took awhile, but I finally explained to him what I just told you. The crate, which is very nearly as big as a Volkswagen when it is fully extended, was whisked away on a dolly while the dolly operator snickered.

Suddenly I felt better. The crate would go in the cargo hold of the plane and I would not be identified with it (or so I thought) until I picked it up in Virginia.

Hah! I had forgotten about U. S. customs in Boston. Customs, however, does not forget anything. I found myself standing in a long line with an Arabian sheik in front and an Alpine mountain climber behind —and an empty dog crate beside me. My luggage had been taken out. Someone at Air Canada had decided that suitcases and fishing rods should travel outside the crate.

Customs officials began to notice the scraping sound approaching them. I began to notice things going on outside.

Fortunately (for him) the customs man had a sense of humor. After hearing the same story that I told the Air Canada agent, he called a co-worker.

"Hey, Joe!" he said. "Take a look at this. The man's got an invisible dog in here."

Joe came over and looked closely at a spot where the Volkswagen's windshield would probably be.

"I don't see no dog," said Joe.

"Oh yeah," said the first man, "there's a dog in there all right. A Saint Bernard. The man's got an invisible Saint Bernard in there."

I left one customs man laughing fit to be tied and Joe wondering what was funny as I followed the mountain climber out of customs.

The rest of the trip was uneventful until I reached Washington National Airport and had to change airlines again.

For a second time they brought my dog crate and luggage to me.

For a third time, I had to explain why I was traveling with a perfectly empty dog crate.

The girl at the counter was sweet and pretty, but she had a no-nonsense mind.

"The crate has to come down," she said. "It takes up too much space. You'll have to take it apart. We'll have to charge you for excess baggage too."

Now I admit that a grown man disassembling a large dog crate in the middle of Washington National is not something the jaded airline traveler sees every trip. Nevertheless, it attracted far more attention than was necessary. And the seated travelers, waiting for planes that must have been hours or maybe days late, were apparently pleased to find the distraction.

When one of the doors swung open and banged my shins, some of the fascinated watchers smiled. Others laughed right out loud.

I evened things up though. When the metal contraption collapsed on the tile floor, I jumped like I'd been shot—but they did too.

"Just leave it propped there beside the counter," said the no-nonsense girl, "and I'll have someone with a truck come and get it."

That worried me. "But don't you think someone might steal it?" I asked.

Her answer was sweet and to the point.

"I think we'll see and hear them if they do," she said with a smile.

She had me there.

Edited by HARRY GILLAM

Big Cedar Rainbow

Randy Ringstaff of Cedar Bluff caught this citation 5 pound rainbow from the waters of Big Cedar Creek over the Labor Day weekend. The lunker took a crawdad bait.

Virginia Wildlife Federation Opposes Back Bay Causeway Construction

The Virginia Wildlife Federation has announced its opposition to the building of any causeway or bridge across Back Bay to the proposed False Cape State Park south of Virginia Beach.

According to former VWF president, Carl Wiberg, Falls Church, "A cross-over of any type is not harmonious with the ecological conditions and would cause irreparable damage to this unique wildlife and aquatic estuary."

The Back Bay controversy is an outgrowth of plans by the Virginia Division of Parks to create the False Cape State Park. The outer banks property being acquired by the Division for the park is now accessible only by crossing Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge which is under the control of the U.S. Department of Interior.

The Back Bay resolution adopted at a recent VWF directors' meeting urges the Division of Parks to obtain access across Department of Interior lands. Department of Interior policy currently precludes any such access.

The Virginia Wildlife Federation is now organizing a statewide council of conservation groups to study the Back Bay problem and make recommendations to the Division of Parks and the Department of Interior. For information on the Back Bay council contact Carl Wiberg, 3336 Spring Lane, Falls Church, phone 703-820-1758.

Commission Offers 200 Acres of Highland Tract for Ski Slope

Following the presentation of a detailed report by Dr. Allan A. Hoffman, Chairman of the Game Commission's Highland County Land Committee, the Commission adopted the committee's recommendations making approximately 200 acres of its Highland Wildlife Management Area available on a lease basis for development as a ski slope. The lease would be offered to the qualified firm submitting the highest bid over $10,000 and would include annual rental of $4,000 per year or 3% of gross receipts, whichever is the higher. The decision to lease this particular tract was influenced by a consulting firm's report that it was much the superior of the two areas being considered for this type of development. Speaking for the committee, Dr. Hoffman said, in defense of the decision to allow the use of State land for this purpose, "an absolute prohibition against the use of any Commission land for any development to advance the general welfare would impair, if not preclude, the acquisition of any future areas by the Commission."

Recommendations for inclusion in the lease encompass prior approval of all plans by the Game Commission and other appropriate state agencies, inclusion of adequate sewage treatment facilities and rigid safeguards against unsightly operations, siltation of area streams and other degradation of the environment. "This is the first time in the history of the Commonwealth that such strict environmental controls have been incorporated in a lease of this type," Hoffman said, and added that he was confident the interests of all citizens would be protected by the lease provisions. Specific controls include Game Biologist approval of all cutting or planting of trees and shrubs, high standards of neatness and safety in all operations, maximum fire protection, mandatory repair of any road or trail damage during construction, prohibitions against motorized vehicles after completion, Water Control Board monitoring of stream quality, and provision for reforestation of the site if use as a ski slope is terminated. The lease includes a reversion clause so that all lands, and improvements not removed, revert to the state if the lease is terminated. The developer will be responsible for sewage treatment facilities, road improvements and other public works necessitated by the project.

A provision in the report allows the leasing corporation to buy and convey to the Commission up to 650 acres of acceptable hunting land in Highland County with the understanding that the value of such property will be applied against the lease purchase and annual rental. Hunting will be restricted on some 450 acres of land adjacent to the leased tract for the safety of persons using the recreational facility.

Twin Albemarle Gobblers

Eastes Gilmer of Charlottesville and his grandson, Randall Leak, proudly hold twin 18 pound gobblers that they bagged within 3 seconds of each other while hunting in Albemarle county last season.

Edited by ANN PILCHER

Snake Time at Camp

Mammals, reptiles and birds, providing food and cover for wildlife as a means of improving hunting, and Commission activities were topics of the talks given by Field Educational Services Coordinator Darrell Ferrell to 90 4-H'ers during their August 9-14 camp session. Here he holds a jar containing preserved rattlesnake specimen.

"Some Enchanted Evening"

There's a private camp in Virginia which includes in its program such things as gathering eggs from the hen house, caring for horses and ponies, gardening, feeding cows, horses, pigs and chickens. Of course, there's also swimming, boating, fishing, and enchanted evenings around the camp fire, toasting marshmallows, eating watermelon and singing. Such tunes as "Old MacDonald Had a Farm," "My Darling Clementine," and "Softly Now the Light of Day" fill the air as another day fades into the land of enchantment. What camp and where? Camp Long Acres in Spotsylvania, run by Mrs. Long (582-5352); open weekends, all winter. Other camps? Here are some:

Camp Shenandoah (Boy Scout), Swoope (Augusta County), Va. (Director: Scout Executive, Staunton, Virginia. Open June through most of August.).

Camp Rock Enon (Boy Scout), Gore, Va. (Director: Scout Executive, Winchester, Va.)

Camp Mayflather (Girl Scout—Washington area), Mt. Solon, Va. (Mrs. Benefield, Girl Scout Council, 1815 Fort Myer Drive, Arlington, Va.)

Camp Mawavi (Camp Fire Girls), Prince William Forest. (Director: Mrs. Maude Katzenbach, 1761 R Street, N. W., Washington, D. C.; 265-4740).

Camp Letts (YMCA), Edgewater, Maryland.

Goshen Scout Camps: Bowman, PMI, Marriott, Baird, Ross and Olmstead. Goshen, Va. (Boy Scouts of America, National Capital Area Council. Camp Director: Mr. Elgin Deering, 1742 Connecticut Avenue, Washington, D. C. 20009; 332-1962).

Nature Camp, Vesuvius, Va. (Director: Mr. Brent C. Heath, Box 634, Gloucester, Va. 23061).

"Climb far, your goal the sky, your aim the star." Why not, young folks? Perhaps you can start the climb by attending camp.

—JAMES K. HALL
525 N. Monroe St., Arlington

One Boy's Answer

Cutline and photo by Jack Randolph

The chore was to rake up the leaves and dump them in the woods behind the house. The problem, as Johnny Randolph saw it, was to find something big enough to hold the leaves so he wouldn't have to make so many trips. His solution, as you can see, was to use dad's light 12-foot aluminum boat. It worked and in jig time.

Incredible Though It Seems

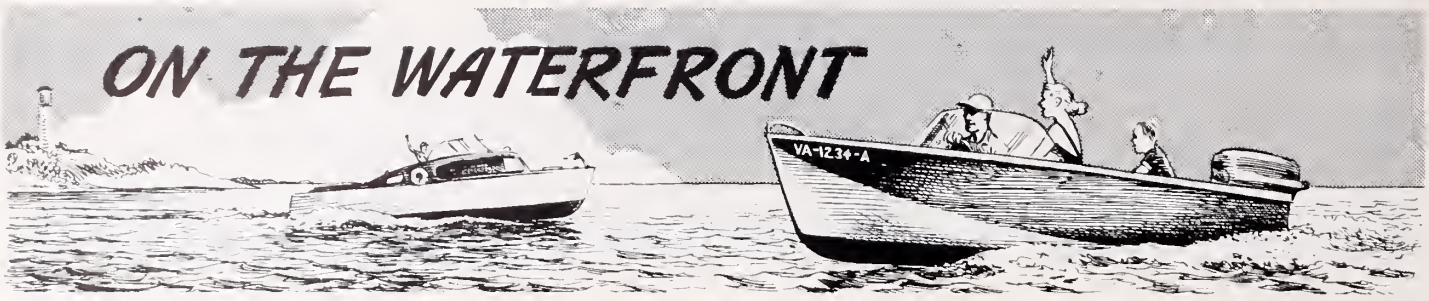
On June 12 Billy Cole of Bluefield, West Virginia, docked his boat for the night on Claytor Lake with a stringer containing two bluegills dangling from it. When he came back in the morning, his line contained a walleye. The big fish (still very much alive) had swallowed the two bluegills, and one of them was lodged in his throat, stringer still attached. Here taxidermist Franklin Mabe of Max Meadows helps Billy display his 31" 9½ lb. walleye that virtually "caught himself."

Photo by Mrs. Mabe

Panorama at the Fair

About 30 mounted wildlife specimens were on display at the large exhibit planned and erected by State Game Warden Jimmy Simpson at the Front Royal Jaycees-sponsored Warren County Agricultural and Industrial Fair, held the third week of August. Two fish tanks held native sport fishes such as bass and bream, with a few goldfish added for color and interest. Panelboards stressed hunting safety, game and fish research, wild flowers, and general conservation. Above the boards, at the very top of the exhibit, hung outstanding entries of Warren County school children in a Ruritan Club sponsored anti-litter poster contest.

Photo by Jerry Wall



Edited by JIM KERRICK

Cold Weather Feature

Commission photo by Kesteloo

Duck hunters should always wear a lifesaving device when underway in a boat. The sportsmen pictured here aren't adequately protected.

The sun was reflected brilliantly from the calm water, outlining the form of the small boat and the man splashing in the water near it. With only a slight breeze blowing it could have been such a nice day for a swim.

The man in the water didn't feel that way about it. At the time he felt three things: the weight of his hunting gear pulling him down, the numbing cold, and blind panic.

It was December and the man, a hunter, hadn't intended to go for a swim at all. All he wanted was to retrieve the duck he'd shot, the first duck of the season. Unfortunately, he leaned a little too far, falling into the water and pushing his 12 foot skiff away.

The boat floated invitingly just 15 feet away, but the hunter was busy trying to stay afloat. For some reason his fingers weren't working properly. He'd been trying to remove his cartridge belt. The weight of the 12 gauge shells combined with that of his heavy winter clothing was intent on pulling him down. Why couldn't he move his fingers to unbuckle that belt? His hands, feet and neck were completely numb; violent shivers racked his body due to the rapid loss of body heat.

The small breeze was blowing the boat away at a slow but steady pace. The panicky hunter finally removed his heavy clothes and decided to swim after the boat. As he started, the exercise immediately warmed him. After 25 yards, weakened by the cold and his previous struggles, he stopped to rest. The body heat he had generated was released into the water, lowering his body temperature even more. The cold drove him to attempt once more to catch his drifting boat. Forty yards later he was completely exhausted.

For over 20 minutes he'd been battling the cold, but suddenly the entire dilemma seemed of no real importance. How ridiculous for him to be in this situation! He'd been boating for years; why was he struggling in the freezing water? He laughed aloud. Confused thoughts ran through his mind. Maybe if he tried to float on his back the air might warm him. An attempt at this only proved that his boots were too heavy to allow his feet to float. How funny, he couldn't float, couldn't swim any longer, couldn't feel his arms or legs. He laughed again at the empty water; this time a high hysterical laugh. Wait until his friends heard what an idiot he'd been.

Time was passing, certainly he was tired, and so very, very cold, but still it was no time to take a nap. His eyelids were becoming impossibly heavy. One part of his mind screamed for him to renew the fight against this new enemy. The desire to sleep was strong, it repressed the warning, and suddenly all was warm and peaceful as he settled to the sandy bottom under 18 feet of 46 degree water.

"Hello, is this Mrs. R. E. Jones speaking? This is the County Sheriff's Department and . . . ."

Winter boaters should be aware of the lethal nature of cold water. A man begins to shiver in the air at 68 degrees; shivering is a sign of rapid loss of body heat. In 40 degrees water a man can freeze to death in less than one-half hour. Our Mr. Jones, as well as hundreds of other boaters, hunters, and fishermen, would still be alive today if he had only followed simple safety rules. Instead, he made mistake after mistake until he paid the ultimate price. With the use of several simple measures he could have saved himself and still be alive today.

First, he should have been wearing a lifesaving device. When body temperature drops below 96 degrees, a victim loses consciousness and is seconds away from drowning, unless he is wearing a lifesaving device. Victims have been revived even after their body temperature had dropped into the 60 degree range, but these lives can be saved only if drowning is prevented.

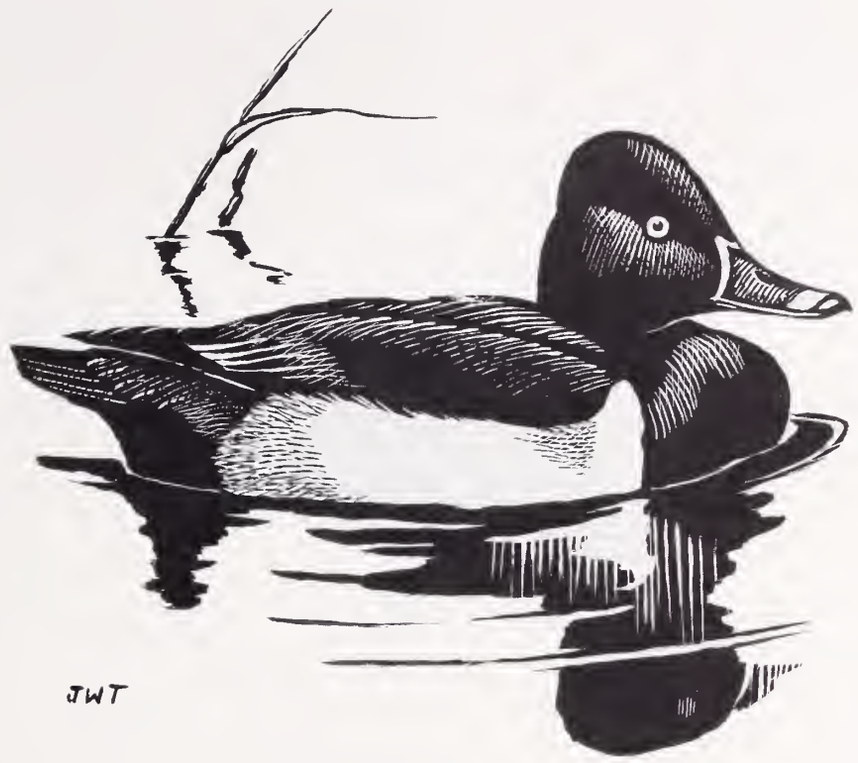
Second, he should have been more careful while reaching for that duck. Small boats are easy to capsize or fall out of if near perfect balance is not maintained.

Third, he should have been wearing a wet suit. This type of exposure suit offers maximum protection.

Fourth, as he did not have a wet suit, he should not have removed his clothing. Winter clothing gives some protection against the freezing effect of the water. Unless the clothes are heavy enough to cause the victim to sink, they should be retained.

Hunting and fishing can be extremely enjoyable winter sports, and a boat can add greatly to this enjoyment, both by way of convenience and comfort. Wear a wet suit and a lifesaving device, know the safety rules, and be sure that the only thing that comes home dead is the game.

Bird of the Month:



Ring-necked Duck

By JOHN W. TAYLOR
Edgewater, Maryland

THE ring-necked duck is better known, especially among hunters, simply as "ring-bill" and indeed, "ring-billed duck" would be a more descriptive name. The light chestnut color, from which the name "ring-neck" derives, is hardly noticeable unless the bird is practically held in the hand. And even then, since the chestnut is an iridescense, a lot depends on the angle of light. The ring on the bill, on the other hand, is quite prominent at considerable distance.

Another identifying mark, useful when the birds are on the water, is the vertical white stripe in front of the wing, not as prominent as the stripe on a wood duck or green-wing teal, but still well defined. This feature helps separate the ring-neck from the scaup (or blue-bill), which otherwise has a very similar color pattern. The shape of the slightly peaked head indicates a probable affinity with the tufted duck of Europe.

Identification is trickier when the birds are in flight. Seen from below, it is not possible to readily tell the ring-neck from the scaup, but if the back is visible, the much darker ring-neck is distinctive.

The ring-neck is more of a freshwater bird than the other diving ducks. It shuns the broad, open waters favored by scaup and canvasback, preferring wooded ponds and secluded coves. And also unlike the others in its genus, it forsakes the water to roost and preen amid the branches of downed trees.

Some ring-necks are with us all winter, but the species is primarily a transient hereabouts. Fall migrants, headed for the deep South, arrive in mid-October, and the flight continues through November. Most of them eventually reach Florida, where very large concentrations of wintering birds occur. Look for them back in early March, though the main passage does not reach Virginia until near the end of the month.

This species has shown encouraging, though sporadic, increases during the last two decades. The increase has coincided with an extension eastward and southward of its breeding range. Once unknown in New England, it now nests frequently there in certain sections. It has even been induced to nest at the Patuxent Wildlife Research Refuge in Maryland, where artificial ponds and special plantings were attractive enough to keep them throughout the summer hundreds of miles from their usual nesting territory.

GIVE

Virginia Wildlife

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